# **Excellence in Public Buildings Committee**

DSA Advisory Board Minutes of Meeting Friday, November 5, 2004

DSA Los Angeles Regional Office 311 South Spring Street, Suite 1301 Los Angeles, California

#### **Committee Members Present**

Charles Higueras\*, Chair JoAnn Koplin\*, Vice Chair Lowell Shields\*

### **Committee Members Absent**

Rogerio Carvalheiro Kerry Clegg\* Kurt Cooknick Bob Dyson\* Ken Francis Stephanie Gonos\* Gary McGavin

#### **DSA Staff Present**

Richard Conrad, Acting State Architect Jack Bruce Mary Ann Aguayo John Vester

### Others Present

Mark DeMan, LAUSD Kathi Littmann, HNTB Architecture Ted K. Osborn, Osborn Architects

### \*DSA Advisory Board member

1 Call to Order

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Committee Chair Charles Higueras called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. and participants took turns introducing themselves. Mr. Higueras welcomed the newcomers to the meeting.

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### **Public Comment/Agenda Overview**

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Some participants indicated they needed to leave shortly after noon. Mr. Higueras said he would keep that in mind.

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## **Purpose of Meeting/DSA Advisory Board Overview**

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Mr. Higueras noted that when the Advisory Board was reconstituted in 2001, the membership was broadened to represent more of DSA's stakeholder groups. Mr. Lowell Shields stated the Board currently consists of 19 members.

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Mr. Higueras said the purpose of the DSA Advisory Board is to advise and make recommendations to the State Architect on a range of key policy issues. He noted the Excellence in Public Buildings Committee was established to look at ways to advocate excellence in school design and construction. He noted that before the hiatus caused by the state budget crisis, the committee focused on developing a best practices resource guide for DSA's customers. It was recently decided that the initial target audience for the resource guide would be those in decision making roles. Mr. Higueras said the group also discussed that excellence means different things to different constituent groups.

25 26 Mr. Higueras invited Ms. JoAnn Koplin to update the group on the process of developing the resource guide and the direction the committee plans to take. Ms. Koplin said the committee began by reviewing the DGS Excellence in Public Buildings (EIPB) program, and drew attention to the guidelines provided in the meeting packet. She noted the EIPB program focuses on program planning, excellence goals, and evaluating performance of buildings. Ms. Koplin stated that the intent was to mirror this kind of guidance, but with specific emphasis on schools to create a resource document for school districts that will guide them to excellence in their projects.

Ms. Koplin reported that defining the concept of excellence has been difficult. After meeting with design professionals and staff, an outline was developed for a resource manual entitled "Excellence in School Buildings" to provide a handy guide for users to jump in at any point in the process and find ways to incorporate excellence. Ms. Koplin noted the committee originally considered a pamphlet or flow chart, but the complexity of the process and steps involved require a much more comprehensive document. She added that the degree of detail needs to be balanced against the need to explain the process to novice school district officials to prevent errors, time delays, or additional costs.

Ms. Koplin said it appears the best way to present the resource material would be as a Web-based document that DSA could post on its Web site with links to guide users so the information can be used to meet their specific needs. The committee realized this could be overwhelming, so the outline was reviewed and prioritized items were "asterisked" to identify the sections that should be developed first.

Ms. Koplin reported that another problem the committee encountered was the need to clearly identify target audiences and determine the level of complexity needed for each type of user. She noted that DSA already has a number of publications and reports that already exist, and hyperlinks to those documents could be provided rather than creating new materials in these areas.

Ms. Koplin invited participants to review the proposed outline, suggest additions or changes, and make comments.

 Mr. Higueras stated that the outline has nine major topic areas and about 70 sub-areas, which represents a considerable amount of material to be developed. He noted that the committee felt the best way to have an impact would be to target the highest decision-making levels, superintendents and board members, and appeal to them first. For this reason, he said the initial document should be digestible and provide enough information so users can familiarize themselves with the issues and serve as good arbiters or directors of design excellence.

Mr. Higueras suggested tackling school business officials and facility directors next, and then planners and front-line staff. He noted it might be best to offer the information in smaller morsels, reflecting the level of interest each group has in the topic areas.

Mr. Higueras proposed that an executive summary or introduction be developed for board members and superintendents to provide an orientation and then refer them to other sources for additional information.

Mr. Shields noted the committee previously talked about approaching key decision-makers in school districts to rally their support and buy-in to incorporate excellence into their school district policies. He added the purpose is to provide best practices information, not

instruction, on how to roll out a school project or deal with construction claims. He recommended defining excellence, describing what others have done, and providing tools for implementation.

Ms. Kathi Littmann stated that what a school board needs to develop policy is radically different than what a school district needs to implement policy. She expressed her opinion that the outline was a great tool for implementing policy, but she cautioned that most school board members do not understand the difference between setting policy and managing a district. She stated school board members can waste hours implementing detailed policies about issues, but the same district may have no policy on matters such as sustainable design. Ms. Littmann noted there are many aspects of the outline that will excite school officials such as daylighting, acoustics, and funding options, but they also need tools to help them make policy. She observed that board members tend to gravitate toward "fun" issues," but hesitate to take on "heavy" ones such as contractual relationships with consultants. Ms. Littmann said that if the purpose of the resource guide is to get a school board to make a policy, a much simpler document could be developed.

Mr. Shields said the committee envisioned a two-part process: policy setting tools for the school board, and implementation suggestions for school district officials.

Ms. Littmann noted it may be better to put implementation details in a separate document. She said curriculum standards in the state are identified in two categories: minimum essential learning and desirable learning, and suggested taking a similar prioritized approach for the resource guide. Ms. Koplin responded that the project is heading in that direction.

Ms. Koplin pointed out that school board members need to know what to request, so articulating critical questions at each step is important. She proposed looking at what school boards need to know to provide policy and leadership, then define that information and determine how to provide it, and what questions should be asked at each point in the process.

Mr. Higueras said he planned to meet with Mr. Kerry Clegg and representatives from the California School Boards Association (CSBA) to find out what type of information school board members need.

Mr. Shields noted DSA needs to define its own role in the excellence process. He recommended assuring school boards that the excellence best practices is not mandated, but encourages voluntary adoption, and illustrate benefits.

Ms. Koplin said DSA's strategic plan talks about DSA's role in terms of "leadership in ensuring excellence in public schools and facilities through innovation and collaborative partnering, key goals such as consistency through standards, training, adequate resources, performance measurements, communication, and recognition."

She noted the goal of the committee is to assist DSA in defining what this means and how DSA can assist the school districts as they work toward excellence. Ms. Koplin expressed her opinion that the best way to approach this monumental task would be to begin with an outline, define excellence, identify target audiences, and determine the information to be provided in each category. After that, information can be added to provide more detail.

Mr. Shields emphasized the need to impress school boards why they should strive for

excellence and what the financial payoff will be. Ms. Koplin said another important issue is helping school boards support excellence through DSA training programs for facility managers and recognizing examples of excellence. Participants commented that DSA should be presented as a supportive ally.

Ms. Littmann pointed out that DSA is actually the permitting agency and districts are well aware of that authority. Ms. Koplin said DSA's strategic management plan talks about shifting from being responsive to problems to being proactive in solving potential problems and taking leadership in preventing problems. Mr. Shields added that DSA is expanding its role extending beyond schools to statewide public building policy and code enforcement.

Participants agreed it would be helpful to provide a clear definition of excellence. Mr. Higueras noted the eight EIPB goals adequately explain the key concepts of excellence, and proposed using those as a basis for the definition. Mr. Richard Conrad clarified that DSA has no authority to require these items so the program needs to be presented as voluntary.

Ms. Littmann noted that school districts are using public funds for school construction, so using those funds prudently by making efficient and cost-effective decisions is a way of honoring the trust of public funds. She said superintendents and board members typically serve for fairly short time periods, but many staff members work at the same school district for years. She emphasized the importance of reaching the staff that implement the program if it is to become long term. Ms. Littmann observed if excellence is defined in terms of efficiency and honoring the trust of public funds, then best practices can be selected to achieve that.

Mr. Shields pointed out the overall intention is to improve education for California's school children so the key factor in decision making should be what is best for the students. Ms. Littmann agreed, but noted that the focus on lowest cost is often the deterrent. She advocated recognizing that reality and finding ways to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness and long-term benefits of design excellence.

Ms. Littmann urged the committee to tackle at least a small piece of the resource guide as soon as possible to get the project underway. She suggested identifying five or ten elements that will immediately convey the message that DSA is credible, thorough, and helpful.

Ms. Aguayo recommended obtaining feedback from school boards regarding the kinds of information they would find most helpful. Ms. Aguayo suggested that the staff develop a mock-up of the Web page for the next meeting.

Ms. Koplin noted the asterisks on the list indicate topics the committee previously identified as critical. Ms. Littmann recommended using task forces with specific agendas and time frames to develop short issue papers on several subjects.

Participants talked about the process of how issue papers would be written and edited. Ms. Koplin noted an author was assigned to each topic before the committee went on hiatus last year, but only a few issue papers have been submitted. Mr. Higueras proposed assigning guest editors who can help with vetting the materials for each topic.

Ms. Littmann recommended seeking sponsorship from educational and design organizations, noting DSA should not have to bear all the costs and provide all the

resources.

Mr. Shields proposed starting with the preface and definition of excellence. Ms. Koplin suggested developing a bulleted list of features that define architectural excellence in school buildings, such as supporting curriculum intent, community needs, and master planning. Mr. Shields recommended having someone write a 5-page paper on architectural excellence as a starting point.

Ms. Aguayo brought up the possibility of hiring a consultant or facilitator to draft issue papers.

Participants discussed the notion that the built environment has an impact on the learning experience. Ms. Littmann recommended helping school boards become more aware of how the built environment affects student achievement and performance. Mr. Higueras discussed the importance of the recent *Williams* decision and its implications regarding school maintenance and stewardship. Ms. Littmann expressed her opinion that school districts cannot afford not to incorporate excellence. She said DSA needs to correct common misconceptions and explain how excellence is actually the most effective use of public funds and saves money in the long run.

Ms. Littmann stated that it is possible to calculate with great certainty the most costeffective amount of floor space needed for law offices, corporate office space, and certain businesses, but similar statistics have not been defined for schools.

Mr. Higueras observed that most people understand the need to maintain cars and equipment, but there is a whole different attitude about maintaining buildings. Ms. Littmann suggested translating benefits in ways that appeal to immediate self-interests. She noted this is the reason the first few articles need to be credible, thorough, and helpful in showing cost return. She added that once interest in the program builds, the momentum will increase and additional details can be provided.

Mr. John Vester pointed out the asterisks in front of the "Introduction" to each section. He said the original intent was to find someone to serve as an overseer of each section and write an introduction. The introduction would provide guidance to the people writing the articles in each category.

Mr. Ted Osborn volunteered to draft a concise document on architectural excellence as a starting point. Mr. Shields suggested using the EIPB goals to group the topics around the outline.

Ms. Littmann recommended thinking in terms of what usable items can be placed on the Web by mid-January.

Mr. Osborn commented that he was struck by the wealth of materials available on the DSA Web site, but suggested that DSA provide more help for users in terms of navigating the site. Mr. Shields recommended asking Ms. Aguayo to work on Web site improvements.

Mr. Higueras proposed selecting five or six sections to address and define their target audiences. Ms. Koplin suggested thinking about headings for the Web site and how materials would fit there. For example, she noted, the *Excellence in Public Buildings* guide should be posted along with a link to school programs. She pointed out that identifying Web site categories might be a good starting point for posting documents as they become

available.

Ms. Littmann emphasized the importance of setting a specific timeframe for each task. She noted tasks include organizing the Web site, assigning responsibilities, and then building a skeleton for the content, with a prioritized approach to filling in the information. She urged the committee to set a specific date by which materials should be ready for posting on the Web site and working backwards from there.

After some discussion, participants agreed that the CASH conference in February would be an appropriate goal for publishing helpful information on critical aspects of the *Williams* case. Committee members recommended contacting Ms. Laurie Morgan, OPSC, for her assistance with *Williams* issues.

Ms. Aguayo said she and Mr. Shields talked earlier about completing the entire project in time for the CSBA annual conference in December, 2005. Committee members indicated they believed this was a realistic timetable.

Mr. Shields proposed establishing a work group to work with the staff in preparing materials on how excellence applies to the *Williams* lawsuit. Mr. Higueras suggested working with California Department of Education and other state agencies, and he volunteered to lead the group.

Mr. Shields recommended reviewing the last two CASH presentations on excellence and making use of what has already been done.

Mr. Higueras thanked participants who had to leave early and invited them to attend future meetings. Mr. DeMan said he knew other people at LA Unified who might be interested.

Mr. Shields suggested focusing on developing five or six white papers based on the excellence goals.

Mr. Osborn observed that the first excellence goal, architectural excellence, embraces and implies other issues like sustainability and cost-effectiveness. Mr. Shields noted DGS has 13 or 14 groups that had been looking at various aspects of excellence.

Participants talked about the goal of incorporating art in public school projects. Ms. Littmann commented that local values influence which aspects of excellence will appeal to different districts. Ms. Koplin suggested coming up with a list of items reflecting what excellence means to DSA, highlighting key items and priorities, and then creating a database for helping school districts achieve their local goals.

Mr. Shields noted student comfort should be a consideration in terms of how school environments affect performance.

Participants talked about "legacy" buildings, or buildings that project a certain identity or character for their communities.

Mr. Shields proposed reviewing the excellence goals and determine which ones should be fleshed out first. Ms. Koplin noted the committee originally wanted to create some kind of flow chart to help users navigate through the process and identify the decisions that need to be made at each step. She said the ultimate goal was to produce a color-coded chart guiding people through the process in a streamlined fashion. Ms. Koplin added that the

committee lacked the resources to pursue this, but she expressed her opinion that having such a planning tool would be very beneficial for users.

Mr. Vester expressed his opinion that providing information and assistance to customers helps prevent future problems.

Mr. Shields drew attention to the "DSA Role" document, and noted the six goals identified there. Participants agreed to fill out the questionnaire.

Mr. Vester noted the purpose of the "EIPB Guide" is to show what the state is doing for its public buildings.

Ms. Littmann recommended that DSA advise its clients regarding a minimum standard of excellence and outline a process for them to develop their own requirements. She noted the state does not fund excellence programs, so districts will choose goals based on their own values and resources. For example, she said, some districts might be interested in cost-effective sustainable design. Ms. Littmann advocated providing clients with sufficient information to make sound decisions through each step of the planning and building process.

Mr. Shields suggested emphasizing two key principles with school districts: responsible use of public funds and impacts of the built environment.

Mr. Higueras noted value is an important concept; he observed that clients need to know they are receiving something worthwhile in exchange for the funds they spend. Mr. Shields pointed out that people need to look at the long-term value and operating costs over time as part of that equation.

Ms. Littmann recommended focusing on safety and security, universal design, and the school as a community partner.

Mr. Vester suggested using terminology like "socially and environmentally responsible" rather than "sustainable."

At 12:25 p.m., the committee recessed for lunch. Mr. Higueras reconvened the meeting at 1:15 p.m.

As a way of introducing the topic of architectural excellence, Mr. Osborn offered to draft a five-page white paper on the need to plan.

Mr. Higueras emphasized the importance of making the "Excellence in School Buildings" information uniform and consistent in terms of quality and quantity. Rather than having the committee try to manage the document, he suggested that DSA hire a consultant to work with the section editors to ensure that the delivered product is consistent. Mr. Shields said he thought DSA had already decided at some point to hire a consultant as proposed. Committee members recommended approaching Mr. Conrad about moving this project forward.

Ms. Aguayo said she envisioned a process of individuals writing articles, which would go to the DSA staff for approval, and then go to a professional editor for finalization.

Mr. DeMan noted his division at LAUSD is responsible for working with state agencies, so

staff people are familiar with site selection, CDE application forms, and plan approvals. He offered the services of his staff in writing papers on repairs, facility problems, and other topics. Ms. Koplin drew attention to the topics under the "Site Selection" part of the outline, and noted "DTSC Reports," highlighted as a high-priority item, is a topic on which LAUSD's experience and expertise would be very valuable.

Mr. DeMan volunteered to write a paper for school districts on dealing with state agencies. Participants recommended getting a letter from the State Architect to the State Superintendent of Schools requesting this assistance. Mr. DeMan offered to provide the flow chart and other materials developed by LAUSD. He said he would follow up with Ms. Koplin after the meeting. Ms. Koplin expressed her appreciation for the help.

Referring to the section of the outline entitled "New Directions in Education," Ms. Koplin said the intent was to work with CSBA and other organizations that deal with teaching methodologies and the neurology of learning. She recommended linking to some of the latest studies in those areas.

Mr. Higueras observed that there are some architectural firms that specialize in this topic and he recommended contacting them for assistance. Participants discussed specific people who might be able to help. Ms. Koplin asked Mr. DeMan to submit names of other people at LAUSD who might welcome an invitation to participate.

Mr. Vester offered to provide Mr. Osborn and Mr. DeMan and annotated bibliography of resource material and copies of what DSA has done so far. He asked the people drafting white papers to send them to him for distribution.

Participants discussed the need to get the DSA Advisory Board's endorsement of the committee's plans. Ms. Koplin said she would provide Mr. Conrad with copies of the preface, introduction, outline, and preliminary flow chart. She suggested enlisting DSA's help in finding volunteers to write the materials for the various topics.

Ms. Koplin noted that if enough people respond to the DSA Web site, it might be possible to sponsor a specific event or workshop at the CASH conference. She urged the staff to try to get the job done within two months, if possible. She also recommended that DSA consider outsourcing the work.

Mr. Vester suggested posting brief news items on the home page to advise visitors that new content is being planned.

Mr. Higueras asked participants to return the "DSA Role" questionnaire to the staff as soon as possible. Mr. Osborn stated he felt overwhelmed by some of the questions. Ms. Koplin said that if respondents can at least indicate their top five concerns, the program can be designed to target those needs first.

Mr. Higueras observed that the fourth section of the outline, "Time to Plan," contains a number of items that seem out of place in the planning stage. Ms. Koplin noted those items were moved from other sections and placed there.

Mr. Shields recommended selecting specific areas that add excellence to the project. Ms. Koplin explained that the outline reflects the perspective of a school board member client. For example, she said, it might be helpful to provide a general explanation of the Field Act, but school board members do not need to know specific building code provisions.

Mr. Higueras suggested thinking in terms of what elements are critical to excellence and what are more peripheral. Ms. Koplin expressed her opinion that planning in general involves excellence.

Mr. Vester observed that the document seems to be aimed at two goals, partnering with people who lack knowledge about building schools, and then, through excellence, improving the buildings that are constructed.

Participants talked about changing the title of the "Know the Codes" section. Mr. Higueras suggested using terms like "indoor air quality" rather than "mechanical," for example and Mr. Shields agreed. He recommended showing how excellence can be applied with specific code provisions.

Mr. Higueras proposed looking at the outline and identify the specific elements that are critical to establishing a definition of excellence. He noted the document should not be aimed at people lacking familiarity in school projects. He said the purpose is to inform people who need to know because they are developing key policies. Mr. Higueras expressed concern that including too much in the outline could dilute its impact and advocated starting with the most critical topics.

Participants commented that student health and comfort were important elements in defining excellence.

Mr. Vester paraphrased excellence by identifying five key principles: 1) create buildings to be proud of; 2) measure success of the building by the success of occupants; 3) lower operating costs over longer operational life; 4) social and environmental responsibility; and 5) an evidence-based process. Participants said they liked these descriptions and discussed and expanded upon the issues within each category. They discussed how to incorporate the concepts of legacy buildings, impacts on communities, conduciveness to learning, and cost-effectiveness.

Mr. Higueras proposed creating a grid showing how the outline topics relate to the five key principles. There was extensive discussion on how to categorize and organize the elements.

# Discussion of Results/Good of the Meeting

Ms. Koplin summarized the results of the committee's discussion. She noted the group identified the following principles of excellence:

A) Time to Plan, with a master planning subcategory;

B) Student Success, with subcategories of: 1) buildings conducive to learning; 2) healthy and comfortable environment; and 3) universal design;

C) Legacy Buildings, including 1) creating buildings to be proud of, and 2) supporting community;

D) Cost Efficiency, with a subcategory of lower operating costs over time;

52 E) Lessons learned, with "evidence-based process" as a bulleted item.

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the last two meetings.

Ms. Koplin asked Mr. Vester to put these principles in writing and send them to participants. Mr. Higueras recommended copying all committee members and everyone who attended

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Ms. Aguayo observed that the next step will be to go through the outline and categorize those topics under the major principles.

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## **Meeting Summary/Next Steps**

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Mr. Higueras noted the committee began by summarizing the discussion from the last meeting and then discussed approaches to developing content for the resource guide. He said the committee decided to define excellence through a series of five principles, with focusing on directing the message to people in policy-making positions, such as school board members and superintendents. The resource guide is envisioned as a compilation of resource information to inform users about the value of excellence in school buildings and encourage them to incorporate excellence.

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Ms. Koplin commented that the group also discussed getting help from school districts and reaching the larger community through a Web-based approach. She noted that once the format is defined and posted, DSA will access the larger school community as an audience.

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Mr. Higueras said the committee plans to correlate the items in the outline from the revised draft Excellence in School Buildings Table of Contents (dated 11/4/04) with the five overarching principles, and then identify the most important topics. In terms of content development, the committee recommends recruiting specific individuals to help draft papers and recommends that DSA hire a consultant to bring the materials together.

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Ms. Aquayo said the staff will contact people at OPSC for their assistance in preparing materials dealing with the Williams case in preparation for the CASH conference in February. Mr. Higueras suggested using the Excellence principles as a framework for developing the *Williams* case presentation.

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Ms. Aquayo said other task assignments will be to work with Ms. Koplin to draft a form letter to school districts soliciting their assistance and support; mocking up a Web page and finding out what an update would entail; putting the principles of excellence in writing; providing a list of people who have attended committee meetings; and investigating DSA's resources for putting the project together.

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Mr. Vester noted he had promised to provide Mr. Osborn and Mr. DeMan with some existing DSA materials.

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Committee members talked about the possibility of DSA providing workshops for school districts at some point in the future.

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Ms. Koplin proposed setting December, 2005 as a target date for completing the project. She suggested contacting Mr. Kerry Clegg for CSBA's input. She also recommended that committee members attend this year's CSBA conference if they can. Ms. Koplin asked the staff to find out the cost of the conference.

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Ms. Koplin said another conference in which DSA could participate would be the CASBO conference, usually held in March.

2	<b>New Business</b>
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There were no items of new business brought to the committee's attention.

# <u>Adjournment</u>

8 Mr. Higueras thanked everyone for their participation. There being no further business, the Excellence in Public Buildings Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.